

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 17 and 18 have been amended. Support for the amendments can be found in at least Figures 2 and 3 in the description at pages 4-7 of the present application. No new matter has been added.

§ 102 Rejections:

Claims 1 and 3-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Gillins (US 6,223,510). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Gillins discloses with reference to Figures 6 and 11 a cutting deck 90 to which a ramp or bumper 4 is secured. The bumper 4 has a generally contoured shape that tracks the shape of the mower deck 90. As clearly shown in Figure 11, the bumper 4 is securely attached to the mower deck 90 along the entire length of the bumper. Therefore, Gillins fails to disclose a "bend section being spaced apart from the trim surface where the mower deck bumper is in a rest state," as required by claim 1, or that an object brought into contact with the mower deck bumper "moves the bend section towards the trim surface," as required by claim 1.

Gillins also fails to disclose or suggest "securing at least one end of the mower deck bumper to the mower deck so as to position the bend section adjacent to and spaced apart from a trim surface of the mower deck," as required by claim 5, or that the bend section is configured and arranged to "bend towards the trim surface upon contact with the objects," as required by claim 5.

Gillins also fails to disclose a mower deck bumper having first and second ends wherein the first end of the mower deck bumper is coupled to the mower deck and "the second end of the mower deck bumper maintaining sliding engagement with the mower deck," as required by claim 10. As noted above, the bumper 4 disclosed by Gillins is fixed at both ends and along its entire length to the mower deck 90 so that the ends of the bumper 4 cannot slide relative to the deck 90.

Gillins also fails to disclose a "mower deck bumper being configured to mount to a mower deck with the bend section positioned adjacent to and spaced apart from at least a portion of the trim surface of a mower deck," as required by claim 17. Gillins also fails to disclose "at least one end of the bumper member being adapted and configured for mounting to the vehicle so as position the bend section adjacent to but not engaging an exposed surface of the vehicle when the bumper member is in a rest state," as required by claim 18. Therefore, Gillins fails to disclose every limitation of claims 1, 5, 10, 17 and 18 and the claims that depend from them.

Claims 1 and 3-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Phillips (US 2,488,140). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Phillips discloses a rubber bumper 43 that is secured to a front edge of a housing plate 42 of the lawn mower. The rubber bumper 43 is secured to the housing plate 42 at multiple positions along the length of the bumper. Phillips fails to disclose that the bumper is spaced apart from the housing plate at any point along the length of the bumper or that an end of the bumper maintains some type of sliding engagement with the housing plate. Phillips also fails to disclose that the bumper has a section that is movable towards the housing plate 42 when contacted by a foreign object. Therefore, Phillips fails to disclose a section of the mower deck bumper "positioned adjacent to and spaced apart from" a surface of the mower deck, as required by claims 1, 5 and 17, or that the bend section is positioned "adjacent to but not engaging an exposed surface of the vehicle when the bumper member is a rest state," as required by claim 18. Further, Phillips fails to disclose "the second end of the mower deck bumper is configured to slide relative to the mower deck while maintaining contact with the mower deck when the mower deck bumper engages the objects," as required by claim 10. Therefore, Phillips fails to disclose every limitation of claims 1, 5, 10, 17 and 18 and the claims that depend from them.

§ 103 Rejection:

Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Phillips or Gillins in view Read (US 1,342,393). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As discussed above, Phillips and Gillins fail to disclose every limitation of claim 1. Read fails to remedy the deficiencies of Phillips and Gillins as they relate to claim 1. Therefore, claim

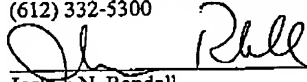
3 is allowable for at least the reason it is dependent upon an allowable base claim. Applicants do not concede the correctness of this rejection.

In view of the above, Applicants request reconsideration of the application in the form of a Notice of Allowance. If a phone conference would be helpful in resolving any issues related to this matter, please contact Applicants' attorney listed below at 612-371-5387.

Respectfully submitted,

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